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THE JUNIOR COLLEGE REMEDIAL PROGRAM.

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A REVIEW OF 20 DOCUMENTS IN THE ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE INFORMATION WAS THE BASIS FOR THIS REPORT ON REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION. MOST JUNIOR COLLEGES, HAVING AN "OPEN DOOR" ADMISSION POLICY, ARE ENROLLING INCREASING NUMBERS OF LOW ABILITY STUDENTS; AND ACCEPT REMEDIATION AS A LEGITIMATE FUNCTION. WHILE REMEDIAL PROGRAMS ARE COMMON AMONG JUNIOR COLLEGES, MOST AVAILABLE MATERIAL ABOUT SUCH PROGRAMS IS DESCRIPTIVE, AND THERE IS LITTLE RESEARCH EVIDENCE OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS. LACK OF SUCCESS APPEARS TO BE DUE TO FAILURE TO FORMULATE APPROPRIATE OBJECTIVES, INADEQUATE STUDENT SELECTION PROCESSES, AND LACK OF TEACHERS QUALIFIED FOR SUCH PROGRAMS. RESEARCH IS NEEDED FOR EVALUATION OF PRESENT PROGRAMS AND FOR A FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO BUILD NEW REMEDIAL SERVICES. (WO)

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# JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW

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## THE JUNIOR COLLEGE REMEDIAL PROGRAM

Most states have legislation that requires public junior colleges to admit high school graduates and all other persons over eighteen who can profit from the instruction. This "open door" admission policy results in many problems, not the least of which are those that relate to subject offerings and instruction. The wide divergence among entering students (in terms of previous educational experiences) requires particular concern and attention as to the types and kinds of subject matter which junior colleges should offer.

One of the least-publicized functions of the junior college is that of remedial instruction. This issue of *Junior College Research Review* examines twenty studies made in efforts to evaluate remedial programs.

***Sources and Methodology:*** Fourteen of the studies reviewed were produced in a junior college. There were also four seminar papers, a journal article and a report from a State Department of Education. Eleven of the documents reported on the results of experimental programs for remedial students. Five were follow-up studies of students enrolled in remedial programs while four documents surveyed remedial programs at the state or national level.

In addition to evaluating remedial programs, fourteen of the studies made recommendations for program modifications based on specific research findings. In these cases institutional research served as the vehicle for curricular change.

***Review:*** For the past decade junior colleges have been wrestling with the problem of how best to meet the needs of students with low ability. Having expressed genuine concern about the need for providing courses and curricula for students with low ability, the Curriculum Commission of the American Association of Junior Colleges in 1962 authorized a national investigation of the practices which junior colleges followed regarding the curricular offerings for students with low ability (JC 670-265). The study also surveyed the views of junior college administrators regarding possible solutions. On the basis of that investigation, the following conclusions were made:

1) Ninety-one percent of the junior colleges followed an "open door" policy for all high school graduates and for all persons eighteen and over who could profit from the instruction.
2) Junior colleges indicated that an increasing proportion of their full-time student body were students with low ability.
3) The remedial function is accepted by junior college administrators as a legitimate function of these institutions. Junior college administrators consistently supported a policy of educational opportunity for all.

A statewide survey of "Remedial English Instruction in California Public Junior Colleges" found that remedial English classes in the California public junior colleges were not sufficiently effective (JC 660-186). This study noted various factors that contributed to ineffectual remedial English classes including: (a) vague objectives; (b) outdated and superficial course outlines; (c) questionable placement procedures; (d) inadequately trained and/or unenthusiastic teachers; (e) high percentage of student failures; and (f) insufficient experimentation.

The California study concluded with strong recommendations emphasizing that remedial English instruction must be improved on the basis of research findings rather than on intuitive bases. Specific recommendations included:

1) *Teachers' Experience, Training and Preferences*

   No inexperienced teacher, unless he has received training for remedial work, should be assigned to teach a remedial class his first year. It is ironic that inexperienced teachers are often considered to be unprepared to serve on major committees, yet they are given some of the most difficult teaching assignments. No teacher should be assigned to teach a remedial English class who prefers not to do so, or who is only somewhat interested. It is sheer folly to expect unenthusiastic teachers to motivate students who are noted for their lack of motivation. Teachers must motivate students toward a desire to learn, and teachers cannot do this if they themselves are not enthusiastic.

2) *Objectives*

   Objectives should be meaningful and stated with clarity and completeness. To insure this, teachers should study current literature on how to prepare objectives. Before formulating any statements about objectives, teachers should ask themselves these questions:

   a) Does the statement describe what the learner will be doing when he is demonstrating that he has reached the objective?

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b) Does the statement describe the important conditions under which the learner will be expected to demonstrate his competence?

c) Does the statement indicate how the learner will be evaluated?

d) Does the statement describe *at least* the lower limits of acceptable performance?

3) *Additional Research*

There is need to know more about the remedial English student, proper placement procedures, and methods and materials to use in order that the current mélange of indecisions and courses organized in haphazard fashion be avoided. More research on a mass basis must be conducted so that the findings stated here might be corroborated or refuted. More research would also put teachers in a position to operate on positive, informed bases. It makes more sense to research our way into improving the study of remedial English than to guess or argue our way into it (JC 660-186).

The study was significant in that it represented a statewide effort to improve a specific remedial program. The recommendations concluding the report strongly suggested areas of improvement, especially in light of the fact that 70 percent of the entering freshmen in California public junior colleges failed to qualify for English 1A (or equivalent transfer course). Simply stated, many students failed to complete the remedial course and dropped out before entering specific curricular programs.

That junior college remedial programs fail to remediate was also evidenced by a recent study made at Los Angeles City College (JC 660-045). The college found that most of its low-ability students did not persist in college for more than one year. The remedial courses were not remediating; thus, the emphasis was shifted to general education. Based on specific research findings, emphasis and content of the remedial program were changed.

A programmed method of instruction in English A (a remedial course) was recently introduced in the San Diego Junior Colleges (JC 670-412). A pilot study was conducted to gain some indication of the relative performance of students receiving programmed instruction. The general plan was to administer final examinations to experimental and control groups and to analyze the results.

The study sample was selected from students enrolled in English A at Mesa College during the Fall, 1966, semester. The experimental group consisted of 58 students receiving programmed instruction, and a matched control group of 58 enrollees not taught by the programmed method. The final examinations were chosen to serve as dependent variables. One type of test was designed primarily for the programmed group while another test was selected for its appropriateness for the group not taught by the programmed method. At the end of the semester each group took both tests and the results were compared by applying significance tests to observed differences in the means. The results of this study supported the hypothesis that students in English A receiving programmed instruction would obtain significantly higher scores on the final examinations than those enrollees not taught by the programmed method.

At Pasadena City College a creative problem-solving approach to learning was used in a remedial course to assist students in preparing for college transfer courses (JC 660-381). This was done by attempting to discover and develop potential by remedying deficiencies in personal-social development, logical reasoning, and critical and creative thinking.

The course was established according to an empirical model, with specific objectives, procedures, and evaluation included. The classification of teaching objectives and learning activities into a taxonomy, supported by current research, and evaluation at each level of the taxonomy in operationally stated criteria, furnished a model for curriculum development.

*Summary:* Since the mid 1950's there has been evidence of a growing concern in junior colleges with the low-ability student. Rapidly increasing enrollments in recent years have served to emphasize the problem. Indeed, discussion has ensued as to whether or not the junior college has an obligation to provide special education for the low achiever. With pressures from society to lengthen the educational experience of all students, the low-ability student has become conspicuous in junior colleges.

In keeping with their commitment to the "open door," junior college administrators have recognized the problem and created remedial programs. On the basis of current research, the following may be concluded:

1) Students in low-ability groups are primarily identified by test scores (SAT and SCAT) in the 12-10 percentile range and below.
2) Various devices are used to keep the students in the low-ability groups together for the duration of their experiences at the junior college.
3) Academic courses offered generally show an emphasis on communications skills—English and speech, for example—along with auxiliary work in remedial reading.
4) Special attention is given in all reports to the selection of teachers for the low achiever. It is generally recognized that such assignments require special teaching traits including broad understanding of students' problems and certain communicative abilities not common to all in the teaching profession.

Results coming from remedial programs which have been in existence for a number of years reflect a less than optimistic view as to the students' subsequent educational accomplishments. There are many reasons for this, the primary ones being a lack of certainty as to what the programs' basic goal should be: Is it to remediate the student for advanced college work? Is it to help the student achieve vocational competence? Is it merely to expose the low achiever to the benefits of general education? Is it some sort of general "holding" action? At this time no definite answers are available and perhaps none should be expected. One thing is certain: research is needed to evaluate these programs, no matter what the objectives might be.

*John E. Roueche*

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